

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am signing Senate Bill 1276 which would reauthorize the California High Cost A, High Cost B, and Teleconnect Programs; however I am asking the Legislature to introduce urgency legislation to address an unintentional chaptering out issue.

This bill unintentionally chapters out provisions enacted in this year's Budget Act to continue funding for the Telephonic Reading for the Blind Program, operated by the California State Library, from the Teleconnect Fund. The Telephonic Reading Program provides access to newspapers and other written library materials to blind Californians in audio form over the phone.

Without SB 1276, rates for rural telephone customers will increase dramatically, in some cases exceeding \$100 a month. This will clearly make phone service unaffordable in these areas and break California's long tradition of providing universally available telephone service. Absent SB 1276, phone service could disappear in some high cost areas.

SB 1276 also appropriated \$18 million from the California Teleconnect Fund to provide discounted rates of up to 50% to qualifying schools, libraries, hospitals, health clinics, and community organizations. The money can be used to subsidize the cost of basic phone service and help bridge the "digital divide" by making new technology, such as DSL and broadband service, more affordable.

The author has committed to introduce legislation to correct this unintentional drafting error. I look forward to working with Senator Bowen to resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger